



The Accusative of Respect in Ancient Greek: Animacy Hierarchy, Semantic Roles and Event Type

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper, we address the function and the distribution of the so-called ‘accusative of respect’ in ancient Greek, from Homer to the fifth century B.C.E. We show that the accusative of respect, which involves an inalienable possession relationship, represents a strategy to promote the most animate argument of the construction (i.e., the possessor) to the subject position and, consequently, to align syntactic roles and case marking with animacy hierarchy. Moreover, we show that a common principle underlies the distribution of the accusative of respect among different types of predicate and that this principle relies on specific semantic dimensions.

KEYWORDS: Greek accusative, inalienable possession, animacy hierarchy, event type.

1. *Function and distribution of the accusative of respect: open issues*

«It is [...] a matter which needs some explanation when we find an accusative depending on a passive verb» (Courtney, 2004: 425). The construction which includes an accusative with a predicate that can be interpreted as passive represents a vexed question that has long baffled scholars (Delbrück, 1893; Brugmann, 1910; Schwyzer and Debrunner, 1950; Hahn, 1954). This construction is frequent in ancient Greek and represents an instance of the so-called ‘accusative of respect’ (also known as ‘accusative of specification’, ‘accusative of reference’ or ‘Greek accusative’: Hahn, 1954; Smyth, 1956: 360, Courtney, 2004; Lavidas, 2013):

- (1) Ἀτρείδης δ' ἀχρεῖ μέγ' ἄλω βεβλημένος ἦτορ (I 9)
“But the son of Atreus, stricken to the heart with sore grief.” (Murray, 1924)
- (2) βέβληται κενεῶνα διαμπερές, οὐδέ σ' ὄτω (E 284)
“Thou art smitten clean through the belly, and not for long, methinks.”
(Murray, 1924)

- (3) οἱ μὲν δὴ στρατηγοὶ οὕτω ληφθέντες ἀνήχθησαν ὡς βασιλέα καὶ ἀποτμηθέντες τὰς κεφαλὰς ἐτελεύτησαν (Xen. *Anab.* II 6,1)
 “The generals, then, after being thus seized, were taken to the King and put to death by being beheaded.” (Brownson, 1961)

The so-called accusative of respect typically refers to a construction including an intransitive predicate and a noun in the accusative case, that denotes something with respect to which the scope of the predicate is limited (Schwyzer and Debrunner, 1950):

- (4) πόδας ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς (A 58)
 “Swift-footed Achilles.” (lit.: “fast with respect to feet”)
- (5) Ἀτρείδης δὲ παρῶχετο γηθόσυνος κῆρ (Δ 272)
 “And the son of Atreus passed on, glad at heart.” (Murray, 1924)
- (6) ἢ διὰ τὸ ἀλγεῖν τοὺς πόδας οὐ βαδίζοντα ὅπου ἂν βούλωμαι (Xen. *Mem.* I 6,6)
 “Or to be prevented from walking anywhere by sore feet.”
 (Marchand, 1923)

The function of the accusative of respect has been debated. Among the various functions that the accusative case has in ancient Greek (Luraghi, 2003: 52 ff.; Crespo, 1988; Schwyzer and Debrunner, 1950; Chantraine, 1942; La Roche, 1891; among others), the role of the accusative of respect appears to be quite vague (Meillet and Vendryes, 1927: 505): «Il est difficile de définir l'accusatif de relation. Révélatrice à cet égard est la définition de Marouzeau [1969]: “on appelle accusatif et instrumental de relation les cas dont l'emploi répond à l'idée de *quant à, pour ce qui est de*”» (Jaquinod, 2006: 42). The common theme connecting the various manifestations of the accusative of respect is unclear and the principle underlying its distribution remains unsettled (Smyth, 1956; Lavidas, 2013): the accusative of respect can indicate the part of a whole, a quality or attribute (such as form, size, name, etc.), either a concrete or abstract property, a place, the site or the extent of something, and also result in quasi-adverbial expressions of duration and measure (La Roche, 1861; Schwyzer and Debrunner, 1950: 67 ff.).

2. Accusative of respect and inalienable possession

Previous studies almost exclusively focused on the properties of the entity denoted by the nouns that take the accusative of respect (La Roche, 1861; Jacquinod, 1989; 2006; among others). These refer to:

– body parts (or the whole body):

- (7) τοῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀντίος εἶμι καὶ εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικεν (Y 371)
 “Against him will I go forth, though his hands be even as fire.”
 (Murray, 1924; lit. “even if he looks like fire with respect to the hands”)
- (8) κεκοσμημένην τὸ μὲν χρῶμα καθαρειότητι, τὰ δὲ ὄμματα αἰδοῖ, τὸ δὲ σχῆμα σωφροσύνη, ἐσθῆτι δὲ λευκῇ (Xen. Mem. II 1,22)¹
 “And her limbs were adorned with purity, her eyes with modesty; sober was her figure, and her robe was white.” (Marchant, 1923)²

– the heart, the soul or other parts of the human being, related to spiritual, emotional or intellectual dimensions:

- (9) [...] χαρεῖη δὲ φρένα μήτηρ (Z 481)
 “[...] and may his mother’s heart wax glad.” (Murray, 1924; lit. “and may the mother feel joy at heart”)^{3,4}

– qualities or distinctive properties:

- (10) [...] ἐπεὶ περίεσσι γυναικῶν
εἶδος τε μέγεθος τε ἰδὲ φρένας ἔνδον εἴσας (σ 248-249)
 “Le donne tu superi per aspetto e statura e, dentro, per saggezza di mente.”
 (Di Benedetto, 2010)
 “For thou excellest all women in comeliness and stature, and in the wise heart within thee.” (Murray, 1919)⁵

¹ It is worth remarking that in this sequence, the terms referring to body parts (or the whole body) take the accusative of respect, whereas the clothing term shows dative case marking (ἐσθῆτι). This it is not by chance. We will come back to this passage later: see below, in the main text. Unlike the usual Journal Style Sheet, in the Greek examples, underlining is used instead of italics in order to better emphasize the relevant terms.

² Cf. also Δ 518, A 58, Xen. Mem. I 6,6.

³ The discrepancy between the Greek expressions including the accusative of respect and their translations into other languages testifies to a construction that is peculiar to ancient Greek. This construction is so particularly a feature of Greek that it well deserved its name of *accusativus graecus*.

⁴ Cf. also τ 136, Δ 272.

⁵ Cf. also Υ 81, etc.

- typically human activities or the ability to perform those activities:
 - (11) τοῦ γένετ' ἐκ πατρὸς πολὺ χεῖρονος υἱὸς ἀμείνων
παντοίας ἀρετάς, ἡμὲν πόδας ἤδ' ἐ μάχεσθαι,
 καὶ λόγον ἐν πρώτοισι Μυκηναίων ἐτέτυκτο (O 641-643)
 “Of him, a father baser by far, was begotten a son goodlier in all manner of
 excellence, both in fleetness of foot and in fight, and in mind he was among
 the first of the men of Mycenae.” (Murray, 1924)
- notions such as lineage, family, etc.:
 - (12) ἐξ Ἰθάκης γένος εἰμί (ο 267)
 “Of Ithaca I am by birth.” (Murray, 1919)
- “name” (ὄνομα) and “denomination, title” (ἐπίκλησιν):
 - (13) τοῦ μὲν ἄρ' υἱὸς ἐπῆλθε, Θεοκλύμενος δ' ὄνομ' ἦεν,
 ὃς τότε Τηλεμάχου πέλας ἴστατο (ο 256)
 “His son it was, Theoclymenus by name, who now came and stood by
 Telemachus.” (Murray, 1919)⁶
- “feats” (ἔργα):
 - (14) [...] ἐπεὶ οὐ ἐθέν ἐστι χερείων,
 οὐ δέμας οὐδ' ἐ φυήν, οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτέ τι ἔργα (A 114-115)
 “Since she is not inferior to her, either in form or in stature, or in mind,
 or in any handiwork.” (Murray, 1924)

The occurrences of the accusative of respect in Homer are variously distributed among the following categories: around 110 nouns of body parts, ca. 60 examples of “heart, “soul” or sim., ca. 80 occurrences of “voice” or “shout”, around 20 nouns of intellectual or moral properties, around 60 examples of “shape” or other perceptual properties (including one example of *κάλλος* “beauty”, characteristic of Aphrodite: I 389), a few examples of family and lineage, a few examples of notions such as dimension, measure, etc., 3 examples of *ἔργα* “feats” (cf. La Roche, 1861). Significantly, the same categories occur in the accusative of respect constructions in later texts (e.g., Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Pindar: Jacquinod, 2006: 63 ff.), with slight differences involving single instances of each category.

⁶ Cf. also η 54, σ 5, τ 247, υ 288, ε 273.

We want to focus, even at this stage, on a crucial point, which has important implications for clarifying the function and the distribution of the accusative of respect construction, as we will show below, in this and the following sections: the subject of the construction refers to an animate entity, typically human.

The typology of the entities denoted by the nouns taking the accusative of respect can be interpreted as belonging to the category of inalienable possession: the hands, for instance, cannot be logically alienated from their possessor, even if they are severed from the whole body: *hands* implies *someone's hands*, like *mother* necessarily implies a relation with another entity (i.e., a child: *someone's mother*); viceversa, a pen and a car do exist independently of their possessor and may represent a physical or temporary possession (e.g., *your pen = the pen that you are using now*), an accidental and temporary possession (e.g., *I have the car tonight = tonight I can use my mother's car*), a permanent possession (e.g., *my mother has a car [but I am the only one using it]*), etc.: in all these cases, there is a relationship of alienable possession between the possessor and the possessum (Lévy-Bruhl, 1916; Fillmore, 1968; Nichols, 1988; Nichols and Bickel, 2005; Heine, 1997; Haspelmath, 1999; Aikhenvald and Dixon, 2013).

Jacquino (1989: 43; 2006: 64 ff.; 2016: 7) mentions an interesting passage from Frei (1939: 188), which shows the strict relationship between the accusative of respect and the notion of inalienable possession: «A l'apologue de Prodicus (Mem. 2, 1, 22), Xénophon présente Vertu comme κεκοσμημένην τὸ μὲν χρώμα καθαριότητι, τὰ δὲ ὄμματα αἰδοῖ, τὸ δὲ σχῆμα σωφροσύνη, ἔσθῆτι δὲ λευκῇ [emphasis mine] ὀρνέε de pureté quant au corps, de pudeur quant aux yeux, de modestie quant au maintien, d'un vêtement blanc». The symmetry – as noted by Jacquino – would require τὴν ἔσθῆτα λευκότητι. However, «ce n'est pas par simple besoin de variation que l'auteur change de construction» (Jacquino, 1989: 43); the accusative of respect is excluded from clothing terms, as these do not fall under inalienable possession.

While alienability is an open-class category (Nichols, 1988: 562 describes its membership as «infinite»), inalienability involves a closed set of nouns. Crosslinguistic investigations identified the prototypes of inalienability (body parts, part-whole relationship, attributes such as name, age, etc.): these largely correspond to the categories involved in the accusative of respect construction.

Also the three Homeric examples of ἔργα “feats” and their continuation in the post-Homeric literature (for instance, the expression of ability to perform certain activities: τὰ πολέμια, attested in Aeschylus, Aristophanes and

Thucydides; the actual use of those abilities: *μάχην, μάχας*: cf. Aeschylus, *Pers.* 27, *Prom.* 415) can be attributed to inalienable possession (cf. Jacquino, 2006: 65 ff.). A distributional analysis of the accusative of respect constructions that include *ἔργα*, in Homeric poems, shows that *ἔργα* are always presented as a distinctive feature of the possessor: e.g., in I 390, *ἔργα* represent a distinctive feature of Athena, as well as *κάλλος* “beauty”, is characteristic of Aphrodite:

- (15) οὐδ’ εἰ χυρσεῖη Ἀφροδίτη κάλλος ἐρίζοι,
ἔργα δ’ Ἀθηναίη γλαυκῶπιδι ἰσοφαρίζοι (I 389-390)
 “Not though she vied in beauty with golden Aphrodite and in handiwork were the peer of flashing-eyed Athena.” (Murray, 1924)

«*ἔργα*, qui semblait aberrant, est à considérer comme le premier signe d’un élargissement de la sphère de la personne dans le cadre de l’accusatif de relation aux capacités spécifiques de la personne et annonce τὰ πολέμια, τὴν ἱατρικὴν οὐ τὴν μουσικὴν du Ve siècle» (Jacquino, 2016: 21).

Nonetheless, an exception deserves special attention: kin terms, which represent one of the prototypical classes involved in the inalienable possession relationship, do not occur in the accusative of respect. The reason for it has not yet been clarified. We will propose an explanation for this noteworthy exception below.

3. *The accusative of respect: unsolved questions and possible solutions*

We have shown above that the accusative of respect construction can be interpreted as a way to express the relationship of inalienable possession. However, crucial questions still remain open: 1) what is the principle underlying the selection of this specific type of construction to express the relationship of inalienable possession? 2) what is the role of the predicate and, in particular, how do the semantic properties of the predicate affect the distribution of the accusative of respect? The relationship between this construction and the verb type, and how this relationship influences the selection of the predicates involved in the accusative of respect still has to be clarified; 3) which are the dimensions critically involved in the relationships between the predicate and the two main arguments of the construction and between the arguments? We will address these unsettled questions in the following sections.

3.1. *Animacy hierarchy, syntactic roles and case marking*

In order to address the first question we start by focusing on a piece of evidence that has not yet received enough attention in diachronic perspective. In Homer, many of the expressions defining the typology of the accusative of respect are well-attested in transitive version⁷. This is a subset of the so-called ‘double accusative’ constructions, that belongs to the ‘whole and part schema’ (*σχῆμα καθ’ ὅλον καὶ μέρος*: cf. Delbrück, 1893; Brugmann, 1910; Schwyzler and Debrunner, 1950: 84 ff.; Hahn, 1954; Jacquino, 1989): the same predicate that occurs in the intransitive version in the accusative of respect construction is involved in the transitive version in the double accusative construction. Typically, the latter shows an active pattern, in which both the possessor and the possessum bear accusative case, whereas in the former, the verb is formally a middle or an aorist in *-η/-θη-*, with passive value (cf. Romagno, 2010; 2014), the possessor is in the nominative case and the possessum in the accusative. The predicate involved in these constructions mostly corresponds to the ‘hitting and breaking’ type:

- (16) double accusative
*τόν ῥ’ Ὀδυσσεύς ἐτάροιο χολωσάμενος βάλε δουρὶ
 κόρσην* (Δ 501-502)
 “Him Odysseus, wroth for his comrade’s sake, smote with his spear on the temple.” (Murray, 1924)⁸
- (17) accusative of respect
*χερμαδίῳ γὰρ βλήτο παρὰ σφυρὸν ὀκρίωντι
 κνήμην δεξιτερῆν* (Δ 518-519)
 “For with a jagged stone was he smitten on the right leg by the ankle.”
 (Murray, 1924)

It is particularly important to observe that the intransitive construction tends to totally replace the transitive: in post-Homeric texts, the accusative of respect is almost exclusively attested in intransitive constructions. The double accusative construction expressing the part-whole relationship «is common in Homer but very rare in the subsequent periods of the language»

⁷ This can also be classified as ditransitive construction with neutral alignment (as the possessor and the possessum have the same marker): see MALCHUKOV *et al.* (2010).

⁸ See also Λ 240, Γ 238, Ζ 355, Α 250, Υ 44, Ψ 47, α 64, κ 161, τ 356, υ 286, etc.

(Lavidas, 2013: 5; see also Jacquiod, 1989). As regards the following passage from Aristophanes: *Clouds*, 24 εἴθ' ἐξέκοπην πρότερον τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν λίθῳ "Would that it had had its eye knocked out with a stone first!" (Hickie, 1853), Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 84-85) comment: «man konnte kaum sagen ἐξέκοψάν με τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν».

What is, then, the function of the accusative of respect intransitive construction, whose frequency even increases in post-Homeric texts?

The idea that we propose here is that the accusative of respect represents a strategy to promote the most animate argument of the construction (specifically, the possessor)⁹ to the subject position. The subject of the construction, in fact, both in Homeric and later texts, refers to a highly animate entity, almost exclusively a human being¹⁰.

We have mentioned in § 2 that kin terms, such as *father* and *mother*, which represent a prototypical category of inalienable possession expressions (Fillmore, 1968; Heine, 1997; Aikhenvald and Dixon, 2013), are excluded from the accusative of respect, which, nonetheless, is a typical construction to express the inalienable possession relationship in Ancient Greek. As remarked above, this fact still needs an explanation. We propose that the reason of it relies on the high animacy of kinship nouns: *father*, *mother*, etc. correspond to the highest positions in the animacy hierarchy and, therefore, represent the prototype of animate inalienable possession. Their incompatibility with the accusative of respect, then, confirms the idea that this construction is a strategy to assign the subject role to the entity that is highest in animacy and, consequently, to align case markers and syntactic roles with animacy. In the accusative of respect, in fact, the possessor, more animate, becomes the subject of the construction and takes the nominative case; the possessum, less animate, remains in the accusative¹¹. The high animacy of kin terms is inconsistent with the prototypical possessum status and, therefore, conflicts with the animacy relationship between the possessor and the possessum.

⁹ A possessor with highest ranking in the animacy hierarchy (SILVERSTEIN, 1976) and, more precisely, a human possessor represents one of the prototypical features of the possession relationship: specifically, of the inalienable possession (HEINE, 1997; AIKHENVALD and DIXON, 2013).

¹⁰ On the animacy hierarchy, see the seminal work by SILVERSTEIN (1976), COMRIE (1978), DAHL and FRAURUD (1996), DE SWART *et al.* (2008), among others.

¹¹ On the 'grammar of possession' (FILLMORE, 1968) and, specifically, of inalienable possession constructions, and on the typology of inalienable possession expressions across languages, see FILLMORE (1968), CHAPPEL and MCGREGOR (1996), HEINE (1997), HASPELMATH (1999), AIKHENVALD and DIXON (2013). Here we propose that the accusative of respect, as opposed to other constructions encoding the inalienable possession relationship, represents a strategy to assign the subject role to the noun which is highest in animacy.

The idea that the accusative of respect is a strategy that aligns syntactic roles and case marking with animacy hierarchy can also account for the high frequency of the accusative of respect in intransitive constructions, as opposed to its almost total disappearance in the transitive constructions with double accusative, in post-Homeric literature.

The double accusative expressing the part-whole relationship can be interpreted as a case of ‘possessor ascension’ (also called ‘possessor raising’ or ‘possessor promotion’: cf. Perlmutter and Postal, 1983; Heine, 1997: 163 ff.; Haspelmath, 1999: 9 ff.; Amy Rose Deal, 2013; among others)¹², without possessum demotion, as the possessum remains in the accusative case, unlike cases such as English *he kissed her on the forehead, she was sick at heart*, in which the possessum (*the forehead, the heart*) is ‘demoted’ to ‘chômeur status’ (cf. Blake, 2002) and shows oblique case marking (Haspelmath, 1999: 9 ff.). In this double accusative construction, the possessor ascends out of the possession phrase to become an argument of the predicate, that is, a dependent of the verb, to which it shows a grammatical relation: in a sentence like *John hit Mary’s head*, for instance, the possessor is part of a genitive construction, whose head noun is the possessum; in an expression like Ancient Greek τόν ῥ’ Ὀδυσσεὺς βάλε κόρσην “Odysseus hit him on the temple (lit.: hit him the temple)”¹³, the possessor is a direct argument of the predicate¹³.

The accusative of respect intransitive construction, on the other hand, is a case of possessor ascension¹⁴, in which the possessor, the most animate entity in the construction, is promoted to the subject role and marked with nominative case; while the possessum, less animate, is in the accusative: the result of this strategy is an alignment of syntactic roles (specifically, subject and object) and case marking (specifically, nominative and accu-

¹² On the terms ‘possession specification’ and ‘external possessor construction’, both proposed to refer to inalienable possession expressions, as also related to possessor ascension, see HEINE (1997) and KÖNIG and HASPELMATH (1998), respectively. For a discussion of inalienable possession and possessor ascension, including terminological issues, see HEINE (1997: 163 ff.; cf. also BLAKE, 2002: 100 ff. and CHAPPELL and MCGREGOR, 1996). On the notion of external possession, from different perspectives (from typological to psycholinguistic, from formal to cognitive-functional approaches), see the various contributions in BARSHI and PAYNE (1999). For a discussion on limitations on possessor ascension depending on the verb class, cf. LEVIN (1993), TENNY (1994: 213 ff.), HEINE (1997: 163 ff. and, in particular, 168 ff.). For an attempt to address the question of body-part possessor ascension from a neuropsychological perspective, see KEMMERER (2003).

¹³ For similar constructions in different languages, including non Indo-European languages, see HEINE (1997: 168 ff.).

¹⁴ It is worth remarking that possessor ascension is typical – even if not exclusive – of inalienable possession (cf. HEINE, 1997: 163 ff.; CHAPPELL and MCGREGOR, 1996).

sative) with animacy hierarchy. The fact that the language progressively abandons the double accusative construction to express the part-whole relation, whereas the accusative of respect, in its intransitive construction, maintains an extremely high frequency testifies to the tendency to assign the most animate argument the subject role (the role prototypically taken by animate nouns) and to encode it into nominative case (the prototypical case of animate subject). Winter (1971) showed that in many Indo-European languages with nominative-accusative alignment, including Greek, Latin, Russian and Tocharian, the nouns with animate referent double or even quadruple the nouns with inanimate referent, in the nominative case; viceversa, in the accusative, the nouns with inanimate referent are double or quadruple relative to nouns with animate referent (see also Lazzeroni, 2002a; 2002b)¹⁵.

The possessor is partially affected by the event but high in animacy; the possessum, instead, is totally affected but low in animacy. In the double accusative construction of the type explained above, the possessor takes the accusative, an atypical case marking for animate arguments (cf. the various cases of non-canonical marking of core arguments, including the so-called differential object marking; Bossong, 1998; Aikhenvald, Dixon and Onishi, 2001; Romagno, 2005a; 2006; 2007; among others); in the accusative of respect construction, instead, the possessor takes the nominative, the typical case marking for animate arguments (Lazzeroni, 2002a; 2002b; Carruba, 1992; Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997; de Swart *et al.* 2008; among others): thus, the expression of the part-whole relationship and, on the whole, of the inalienable possession relationship is encoded into a construction that shows a 'canonical' alignment of syntactic roles and case marking with animacy. The entity highest in affectedness is the possessum, which could be a perfect candidate, then, for the subject role in passive constructions¹⁶ such as (17) (see also (1), (2), (3), above). Nonetheless, in these constructions, the nomi-

¹⁵ The preference of the nominative case for animate arguments is related to the notion of agentivity (VENDLER, 1967; VAN VALIN and LAPOLLA, 1997): agentive predicates, such as *murder*, *walk*, etc. require the subject to have the control of the event; more animate entities are the best candidate for agentive roles and, therefore, are more frequently assigned the subject role of agentive verbs. In double accusative constructions, in which both the subject and the object possessor are animate, the nominative case is assigned to the argument that has an active role, i.e., the author of the event (= the actor, as opposed to the undergoer: on this notions, see VAN VALIN, 1990; VAN VALIN and LAPOLLA, 1997; cf. also § 3.2. and footnote 26, below).

¹⁶ We will address the question of the predicate types involved in the accusative of respect and the related issues of affectedness hierarchy and semantic roles of the verb arguments in the following sections.

native subject is assigned to the possessor, because it is the most animate argument in the construction.

This explanation can also solve the *aporia* – referred to by Hahn (1954) as irreducible – whereby there is no double nominative construction paralleling the double accusative of the part-whole schema: «we have absolutely no trace in Homer of a nominative body-part noun used originally as one of two subjects [...] of a passive verb [...] no such instances exist» (Hahn, 1954: 282). Body parts (the possessum) are less animate than the possessor (a human being): only the most animate argument is promoted to nominative subject, in order to match the animacy relationship between possessor and possessum with grammatical coding. Analogously, the apparently insurmountable difficulty by which an affected entity is marked with the accusative case in a passive construction (see § 1) can be overcome. It has been affirmed that «the fact that the accusative with an active verb should remain accusative with a passive verb is the crux of the whole matter» (Hahn, 1954: 241). However, the explanation that we proposed here can account for the fact that the less animate argument (the possessum), which takes the accusative in the active construction, remains in the accusative in the passive, while the possessor (higher in animacy), takes the nominative.

In addition, the replacement of the double accusative construction belonging to the part and whole schema by the intransitive construction with accusative of respect represents a change in the viewpoint on the described event (i.e., the perspective from which the speaker describes the event). This change follows the animacy hierarchy and confirms the idea proposed in the present paper: «there is abundant evidence that higher positions on the EH [empathy hierarchy, that corresponds to the animacy hierarchy, in the Author's terms] counts as higher eligibility for viewpoint placement» (DeLancey, 1981: 645)¹⁷.

The hypothesis – advanced by Hahn (1954) – by which the passive construction with the accusative of respect would have evolved from the active construction with double accusative of the whole and part through an intermediate stage of accusative constructions with middle predicates is hardly tenable. Certainly, the relationship between the active transitive construction including the whole and part schema and the accusative of respect in intransi-

¹⁷ It has been shown that the notion of viewpoint is also related to the notion of attention flow, i.e., the order in which the speaker expects the hearer to attend to the constituents in a sentence: specifically, the noun phrase constituents (DELANCEY, 1981). Consistently with the arguments discussed above, crosslinguistic investigations showed that the more animate entities are the best candidate to represent the starting point of natural attention flow (DELANCEY, 1981: 650 ff.).

tive constructions represents a crucial issue – as also shown above – and any consistent explanation for the function and the distribution of the accusative of respect must account for this relationship. However, certain points of the Author’s thesis appear difficult to be maintained: in particular, 1) the function of the middle voice cannot be reduced to the idea that «the middle represents the subject as acting either upon himself or for himself» (Hahn, 1954: 254); the middle voice, instead, comprises a consistent set of values that belong to the unaccusativity spectrum¹⁸ (Gonda, 1975; Benveniste, 1966; Lazzeroni, 1990; 2014; Benedetti, 2002; Romagno, 2002; 2005b; 2010); 2) the «resemblance» of the middle voice to the active voice (Hahn, 1954: 283 ff.) is quite far to be clear; in fact, the functional opposition between active and middle is also shown by the fact that their selection was originally lexically-dependent (Delbrück, 1897; Lazzeroni, 1990; Romagno, 2002; 2005b; 2010); a ‘resemblance’ can be established, instead, between middle and perfect, and between middle and aorist in $-\eta-$ (Romagno, 2005b; 2014; Lazzeroni, 2014); 3) passive is not a separate category from middle, but is one of the functions of Ancient Greek middle voice, and so is reflexive (which is discussed by Hahn, 1954: 258 ff.¹⁹; see Romagno, 2010; Kemmer, 1993); 4) there is a need for distinguishing formal from functional grounds: ‘passive’ and ‘middle’ predicates, in fact, are formally identical. It is not by chance that a large number of occurrences of the accusative of respect involves middle participles with passive value; 5) as we will discuss in detail in the following sections, the use of the accusative of respect in passive constructions is strictly related to its use with change of state verbs, states and adjectives: in the present paper, we want to show that the same principles underlie the distribution of the accusative of respect among different predicate types.

¹⁸ Unaccusatives represent one of the two sub-classes of intransitive verbs, that show opposite behaviour in a large number of different languages: unaccusatives, such as *to arrive, to die* vs. unergatives, such as *to walk, to talk* (e.g., Italian: *le ragazze hanno camminato* “the girls have walked” vs. *le ragazze sono arrivate* “the girls have arrived”). This is the so-called phenomenon of ‘split intransitivity’: this phenomenon is morphosyntactically manifested, but semantically determined. It is possible to identify two main parameters that govern the unaccusativity/unergativity hierarchy across languages: i.e., telicity, the property by which the verb necessarily entails a specified endpoint, that typically corresponds to a change of state of the subject, and agentivity, the property by which the subject of the verb has the control on the event: unaccusative verbs are typically telic and unagentive, whereas unergative verbs are typically atelic and agentive (see: PERLMUTTER, 1978; VAN VALIN, 1990; LEVIN and RAPPAPORT HOVAV, 1995; SORACE, 2000; ROMAGNO, 2002; ALEXIADOU *et al.*, 2004, among many others).

¹⁹ It is worth specifying that cases of ‘pure reflexives’, in which both the agent and the patient (which are coreferential) are expressed, show the same ‘transitive’ pattern as active constructions in which the agent and the patient are not coreferential (see Ξ 162 vs. μ 18).

3.2. *Semantic roles and event type*

The accusative of respect has been defined as «de tous les types d'accusatifs, le seul qui complète une forme nominale» (Jacquinod, 2016: 21). But, if we look at it closely, we notice that the accusative of respect actually affects the whole event, as it involves the relationship between the predicate and its argument(s). How this relationship impacts the distribution of the constructions including an accusative of respect remains unsettled, as discussed in § 3. In particular, the role of the verb, and, specifically, of the semantic properties of the predicate in defining the function and the distribution of the accusative of respect still has to be clarified. In order to address these unsolved questions, we start by analyzing the event types involved in the constructions including an accusative of respect. Our analysis comprises Ancient Greek literary texts, from Homer to the fifth century B.C.E. For each type, we will provide examples that are representative of the whole category.

The accusative of respect occurs in combination with:

- adjectives (both attributive and predicative adjectives); this construction is extremely frequent in both Homeric and post-Homeric texts (see exx. (4) and (5))²⁰:
- (18) ἦν τῶν ἐπικούρων Ἀμάσιος ἀνὴρ γένος μὲν Ἁλικαρνησσεύς, οὐνομα δὲ οἱ Φάνης, καὶ γνώμην ἱκανὸς καὶ τὰ πολεμικὰ ἄλκιμος. (Herodotus, III 4,1)
 “There was among Amasis’ mercenaries a man who was a Halicarnassian by birth, a clever man and a good soldier, whose name was Phanes.”
 (Godley, 1920)
- predicates²¹ expressing a state, property or condition (see ex. (6), with ἀλγέω “to feel pain”; ex. (9), with χαίρω “to be glad, to rejoice”)²²:

²⁰ The accusative of respect in combination with adjectives is also found in inscriptions: e.g., IG, XIV, 134: ἀμέπτως τὸ(ν) βίον “irreproachable in his life”.

²¹ We use the term ‘predicate’ as related to functional dimensions, independently of formal distinctions. This predicate category, for instance, comprises both active and middle forms, perfect forms, aorist in -η-, both finite and nonfinite verb forms, etc. Analogously, passive predicates include middle forms, aorist in -η-/θη-, finite verb forms, participles, etc. What is relevant here is the logical structure of predicates and the semantic representation of events (cf. VENDLER, 1967; DOWTY, 1979; VAN VALIN and LAPOLLA, 1997, among others).

²² With verbs such as στάζω “to drip”, the predicate involved in the accusative of respect intransitive construction encodes the anticausative member of a causative/anticausative alternation, that expresses a state or condition of the subject (or, in different cases, a change of state of the subject:

- (19) αἰνῶς μὲν κεφαλὴν τε καὶ ὄμματα καλὰ ἔοικας
 κείνῳ (α 208; cf. Y 371 = ex. (7))
 “Moltissimo per la testa e i begli occhi somigli a lui.” (Di Benedetto, 2010)
 “You resemble him very much in your head and your beautiful eyes.”
- (20) ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως οὐ πάμπολυ διαφέρει γυνὴ ἀνδρὸς τὴν φύσιν;
 (Plato, *Republic*, 453b)
 “Can it be denied then that there is by nature a great difference between
 men and women?” (Shorey, 1969)
- predicates referring to a change of state (achievements and accomplish-
 ments: cf. Vendler, 1967; Bertinetto, 1986):
- (21) [...] μελαίνετο δὲ χροῖα καλόν (E 354)
 “[Her] beautiful skin became dark.” (lit.: “[she] became dark at the beautiful
 skin”)
- (22) τὴν κλεῖν συνετρίβην καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν κατεάγην (Andocides, *On the
 Mysteries*, 61)
 “I broke my collar-bone and fractured my skull.” (Meidment, 1968)
- passive predicates (see exx. (1), (2) and (3); ex. (17))²³:
- (23) οἱ τε διεφθαρμένοι ὑπὸ τῆς χιόνης τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς (Xenophon, *Anabasis*,
 IV 5,12)
 “Those whose eyes had been blinded by the snow.” (Brownson, 1961)
- (24) ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσ’ Ἰάσονος (Euripides, *Medea*, 8)
 “Her heart smitten with love for Jason.” (Kovacs, 1994).

cf. the following predicate category, in the main text): Sophocles, *Ajax*, 9-10 ἔνδον γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἄρτι
 τυγχάνει, κᾶρα / στάζων ἰδρῶτι καὶ χεῖρας ξιφοκτόνους “for the man has just now gone in, dripping
 with sweat from his head and from his hands that have killed with the sword” (JEBB, 1893). Cf. also
 Euripides, *Suppliants*, 586: the text is corrupted, but if the conjecture *στόμα* is accepted (OATES and
 O’NEILL, 1938), this represents one of the extremely rare cases of non-human possessor, as the noun
 in the accusative of respect refers to a horse’s mouth. *στάζω* “to drip” (“faire tomber goutte à goutte” or
 “tomber goutte à goutte”: DELG) is a case of «labile non-direct opposition», in Haspelmath’s terms
 (HASPELMATH, 1993): the same verb, with no extra marker, encodes either the causative member of
 the causative/anticausative alternation, that denotes an externally caused event (e.g., *the sun melts the
 snow*), or the anticausative member (also called ‘inchoative’: HASPELMATH, 1993), that denotes the
 event with no external cause (e.g., *the snow melts*; see also LEVIN and RAPPAPORT HOVAV, 1995; KU-
 LIKOV, 1998).

²³ The verbs in this category mostly refer to a change of state: ἐκκόπτω “to cut” (e.g., Demos-
 thenes, 18,67), διαφθείρω “to damage, to ruin” (e.g., Xen., *Anabasis*, IV 5,12; see (23)), πλήσσω “to hit,
 to beat, to punch” (e.g., Π 403), also with verbal prefixes, ἐκπλήσσω, καταπλήσσω “to knock out, to
 shock, to scare” (e.g., Γ 31, see also (24)), διαῖζω “to break” (e.g., P 535), πίμπλημι “to fill up” (e.g., Y 777),
 etc.

These predicate categories show a striking commonality. This commonality provides the key to answer the questions explained at the beginning of this section.

All the event²⁴ types involved in the accusative of respect construction imply the representation of a state, that is, they have a state predicate in their logical structure (in Dowty's terms: Dowty, 1979; see also Vendler, 1967; Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997; Van Valin, 2007). The state may be either inherent or acquired as a consequence of a change of state.

In the former case, the event can be formally represented as **state'** (x): e.g., **be fast'** (x):

(25) *Achilles is fast* = **be fast'** (Achilles); cf. ὤκυς, in ex. (4);

in the latter case, as **BECOME state'** (x)²⁵: e.g., **BECOME dark'** (x):

(26) *her skin becomes dark* = **BECOME dark'** (her skin);
cf. μελαίνετο, in ex. (21).

The representation of a state or a change of state may either include (e.g., exx. (1), (2), (3), (17), (23), (24)) or exclude an external cause (e.g., exx. (4), (5), (6), (7), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22)).

The argument of the state predicate refers to an entity that is in a given state/condition or undergoes a change of state/condition, that is, it has the semantic role of an undergoer, prototypically, of a patient or a theme²⁶.

²⁴ We wish to specify that the term 'event' is used here in a neutral sense, to comprise both states and dynamic verbs (cf. VENDLER, 1967).

²⁵ We wish to specify that we intentionally showed only the formal representation of achievement verb class, for the sake of simplicity. As is well-known, the notion of change of state involves both achievements and accomplishments, i.e., the two classes of telic verbs, which differ in the length of time involved in the event: achievement verbs are less durative, whereas accomplishment verbs are more durative and, unlike achievements, include the representation of an activity that causes a change of state (VENDLER, 1967; DOWTY, 1979; BERTINETTO, 1986; VAN VALIN and LAPOLLA, 1997; VAN VALIN, 2007, among others). On the notion of telicity, see below, in the main text.

²⁶ Specific instances of semantic roles can be subsumed under two main macroroles: actor and undergoer. The prototypical actor is an agent and the prototypical undergoer a patient (or a theme). On the notion of macrorole, see, in particular, the contribution of the Role and Reference Grammar: FOLEY and VAN VALIN (1984), VAN VALIN and LAPOLLA (1997). Semantic roles are also called thematic roles or thematic relations, in different frameworks, depending on whether the focus is on the semantic role of the arguments or on the grammatical relation they take to the verb. On the *continuum* of semantic roles and on terminological issues, from different perspectives, see FILLMORE (1968), JACKENDOFF (1976; 1987), CHOMSKY (1981), DOWTY (1991), VAN VALIN and LAPOLLA (1997), among others.

It is, then, clear what principle underlies the distribution of the accusative of respect, a principle that is strictly related to the functional-semantic dimensions involved in this construction. The accusative of respect requires an undergoer argument, as it implies the representation of a state or a change of state. It does not occur, in fact, in combination with verbs that do not entail a state or a change of state, such as *to walk* or *to hear*, in expressions like **to walk with respect to legs/feet* or **to hear with respect to ears*. The reason of this can be identified in the function of the accusative case, more precisely, in the relationship between case marking and semantic role: the accusative case is the prototypical case of patients and, therefore, encodes the more affected argument. In fact, with verbs such as *to walk* or *to hear*, the body part (that is, the possessum, in an inalienable possession relationship), shows oblique case marking: e.g., Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 1385: ὀρθοῖς ἐμελλον ὄμμασιν τούτους ὄρᾶν; “Was I to look with steady eyes on this folk?” (Jebb, 1887); Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 210: ἴδοιτο δῆτα πρευμενοῦς ἀπ’ ὄμματος “May he indeed behold you, and with a gracious eye” (Smyth, 1926). Viceversa, in cases like *to be glad at heart* or *to hit/to be hit on the head* (cf. ex. (5) and exx. (2), (16), (17), respectively), the possessum takes the accusative of respect, instead of an oblique case (e.g., the prepositional locative phrase, in the English examples): this establishes a correspondence between argument coding and semantic role, since the accusative – as we have explained above – is prototypical for the semantic role of undergoer.

The accusative of respect, then, appears to function as a prototypical accusative case, as it applies only to undergoer arguments.

The reason for the semantic role of the possessor (and of his/her possessum) in the constructions including an accusative of respect cannot be reduced to the object status that the possessor (and his/her possessum) have in the double accusative construction on the whole and part schema (on which, see § 2): the requirement of having an undergoer argument, in fact, does not apply only to those predicates that occur in both the transitive and the intransitive/passive construction in Homer (e.g., βάλλω “to hit”, πλήσσω “to hit, to beat, to punch”, (ἀπο)τέμνω “to cut”, etc.: cf. § 3.1., exx. (16) and (17); § 3.2., exx. (23) and (24)), but follows a more general principle that governs the distribution of the accusative of respect among different event types, including adjectives and one-argument verbs denoting a state or a change of state²⁷.

²⁷ This observation can also shed new light on the relationship between the accusative of respect and the body part accusative in partitive apposition (specifically, in the double accusative con-

Another point, that has not yet been noticed so far, needs to be further clarified. We have shown that the accusative of respect encodes an affected entity²⁸. The notion of change of state, as encoded into either an intransitive/passive predicate (cf. exx. (1), (2), (3), (17), (21), (22), (23), (24)) or an active transitive predicate (cf. ex. (16) and footnote 8, in § 3.1), then, is one of the critical dimensions involved in the accusative of respect. The representation of a change of state is proper to verbs denoting telic events. These verbs, such as *to die*, *to murder*, *to arrive*, *to build*, *to break*, *to cut*, necessarily entail a specified endpoint, that corresponds to the change of state of the affected participant(s); as opposed to verbs denoting events such as walking or seeing, that do not have any delimitation (in space or time) or final state (Vendler, 1967; Bertinetto, 1986). The affected entity that takes the accusative of respect corresponds to the possessum of an inalienable possession relationship: therefore, the possessor, typically – rather, almost exclusively – human, is also affected by the event that the verb denotes. This event, though, does not entail a total and definite change of state of the whole possessor, as the scope of the predicate is defined by the term that takes the accusative of respect. The accusative of respect, then, requires a further restriction on the selection of the event type, a restriction that depends on the degree of telicity of the event as related to the degree of affectedness of its participant(s): inherently telic verbs that do not allow a limitation on the affectedness of their animate, typically human, undergoer argument, such as *to kill*, *to murder*, *to die*, are not involved in the constructions including an accusative of respect²⁹. This limitation refer to the possibility that the event affects the possessor only partially (e.g., in a body part, but not in the whole body), like in cases such as *to break*, *to cut*, *to cover*, *to hit*, etc. (cf. exx. (2), (3), (16), (17), (22), (23), (24)), and/or involves a less definite change of state and, consequently, a lower degree of telicity: the notion of dying, for instance, entails a total and definite change of state, whereas the notion of improving or those of becoming dark and spoiling/rotting (cf. ex. (21); Xenophon, *Anabasis*, IV, 5,12: οἱ τε ὑπὸ τοῦ ψύχους τοὺς δακτύλους τῶν ποδῶν ἀποσεσηπότες “Or those whose toes had

struction): it has been proposed that the former developed from the latter (BRUGMANN, 1910; HAHN, 1954; cf. also a hint about this issue in DELBRÜCK, 1893); however, the arguments discussed so far show a more complicated scenario, in which single elements, though, can be accounted for in a consistent explanation.

²⁸ On the notion of affectedness in relation to the ‘external possessor construction’, in a typological perspective, see KÖNIG and HASPELMATH (1998), HASPELMATH (1999).

²⁹ Significantly, there is typological evidence on limitations on the body part-possessor ascension, related to the degree of telicity and affectedness (e.g., LEVIN, 1993, on English verb classes).

rotted off by reason of the cold” (Brownson, 1961) can even be encoded into a gradual completion predicate, and, then, refer to a gradual approach to the telos (see Bertinetto and Squartini, 1995; Beavers, 2013):

(27a) *La situazione è migliorata di parecchio.* (Italian)
 “The situation has improved by a lot.”

(27b) *È diventato parecchio scuro.* (Italian)
 “It became quite dark.”

vs.

(28a) **Il nemico è morto di parecchio.* (Italian)
 “The enemy died by a lot.”

(28b) **Mario è arrivato di parecchio.* (Italian)
 “Mario has arrived by a lot.”

4. *Conclusions*

To summarize and conclude, in this paper we have addressed the function and the distribution of the accusative of respect in ancient Greek, from Homer to the fifth century B.C.E. We first discussed the relationship between the accusative of respect and inalienable possession and, then, provided an answer to the following key questions: 1) what is the principle underlying the selection of this specific type of construction to express the inalienable possession relationship? 2) what is the role of the predicate in defining the function of the accusative of respect and how do the semantic properties of the predicate affect the distribution of this construction? 3) which are the dimensions critically involved in the relationships between the predicate and the two main arguments of the construction and between the arguments?

Specifically, we have shown that the accusative of respect represents a strategy to promote the most animate argument of the construction (i.e., the possessor) to the subject position and, consequently, to align syntactic roles and case marking with animacy hierarchy. This idea can also: 1) explain the noteworthy and unsettled exception by which kin terms, a prototypical category of inalienable possession, are excluded from the accusative of respect: the reason of this incompatibility relies on the high animacy of kinship nouns, which conflicts with the animacy relationship between the possessor and the possessum established by the accusative of respect con-

struction, in which the possessor, more animate, is in the nominative, and the possessum, less animate, in the accusative; 2) account for the high frequency of the accusative of respect in intransitive constructions, as opposed to its almost total disappearance in the transitive constructions with double accusative, in post-Homeric literature: the fact that the language progressively abandons the double accusative construction to express the part-whole relation, whereas the accusative of respect, in its intransitive construction, maintains an extremely high frequency, testifies to the tendency to assign the most animate argument to the subject role (the role prototypically taken by animate nouns) and to encode it into nominative case (the prototypical case of animate subject); 3) solve the apparently irreducible aporia whereby there is no double nominative construction paralleling the double accusative of the part-whole schema: body parts (the possessum) are less animate than the possessor (a human being); only the most animate argument is promoted to nominative subject, in order to match the animacy relationship between possessor and possessum with grammatical coding; 4) overcome the apparently insurmountable difficulty by which an affected entity is marked with the accusative case in a passive construction. It has been affirmed that «the fact that the accusative with an active verb should remain accusative with a passive verb is the crux of the whole matter» (Hahn, 1954: 241). However, the comprehensive explanation proposed here accounts for the fact that the less animate argument (the possessum), which takes the accusative in the active transitive construction, remains in the accusative in the passive, whereas the possessor (higher in animacy), takes the nominative.

In addition, we showed that the semantic properties of the predicates involved in the accusative of respect are fundamental to defining its function and specifically govern its distribution among different event types. Our analysis revealed that the principle underlying the distribution of the accusative of respect is strictly related to the functional-semantic dimensions involved in this construction: the accusative of respect requires an undergoer argument (a patient or a theme), as it implies the representation of a state or a change of state. We discussed this in relation to the function of the accusative case, more precisely, to the relationship between case marking and semantic role: the accusative case is the prototypical case of patients and, therefore, encodes the more affected argument. The accusative of respect, then, appears to function as a prototypical accusative case, as it applies only to undergoer arguments and, consequently, establishes a correspondence between argument coding and semantic role.

Moreover, a further restriction on the selection of the event type by the accusative of respect had not been noticed so far. We explained it, by showing how it depends on the degree of telicity of the event, as related to the degree of affectedness of its participant(s): inherently telic verbs that do not allow a limitation on the affectedness of their animate, typically human, undergoer argument, such as *to murder* or *to die*, are not compatible with the accusative of respect.

Acknowledgments

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